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ABSTRACT

It has become increasingly important for teachers to understand the key issues of values education. Values taught in the formal curriculum and transmitted in the hidden curriculum have a profound effect on the total educational experiences of students. Careful and thoughtful reception and transmission of communication concerning values are skills that assume more and more significance in a rapidly changing world. This paper surveys recent literature in the area of values education. An 11-item bibliography is included. (DB)

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The Issue of Values Education

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Running head: THE ISSUE OF VALUES EDUCATION

The Issue of Values Education

The issue of the teaching of values is an important and active area in education. In the schools, the overarching values reflect those of society as a whole; those values most strongly held in the community at a given time are most likely to dominate and shape the curriculum. In the American school, the three most likely foundational values are egalatarianism, efficiency, and freedom of choice; these tend to follow a cyclical pattern. There are three types of values found in the effective curriculum. These are as follows:

1. Behavioral values (those which are related to conduct in the classroom)
2. Procedural values (those which are consonant with the rational manner of the investigator; the goal of Inquiry learning)
3. Substantive values (beliefs held by an individual as a result of family, ethnic, religious, or cultural experience (Ellis 206-44)

Among the many approaches to values teaching being incorporated in the American classroom are the behaviorist approach, value sharing, value clarification, and the value process approach. In the behavioral or conditioning approach, tastes, attitudes, values, and finally value

systems are distinguished in a step-by-step continuum. All steps in the continuum are seen as the result of conditioning, with values as the central core of what we call character. In value sharing, eight basic values in life are identified. These are affection, enlightenment, power, rectitude, respect, skill, wealth, and well-being; the sharing of these basic values is viewed as crucial for human dignity to flourish in a democracy. In value clarification, one must proceed through a number of steps in a valuing process before something can be said to become a value. Choosing freely from alternatives after considering consequences, prizing, cherishing and publicly affirming a belief, and acting consistently and repeatedly are all steps in this process. In the value process approach, a planned and systematic approach to teaching values is advocated; an important issue in this approach is the representativeness or relativity of the values teachers choose to develop and foster (Reilly 216-39).

Harold Howe states that family, church, and school constitute a triangle of influence on children, with family at the peak and church and school separated by a dotted line at the base (57). The main values received from the school are of two kinds: those that constitute the core of our democratic heritage and those that make up the commonly

shared ethical values of all people, such as honesty. Since schools try to elicit from young people behavior and attitudes that are acceptable and useful in society, the question really becomes, "How do schools teach values that are useful?" The most effective instrument is the human relationship between students and teachers in the school, a relationship reflecting friendliness, warmth, and respect between teachers and learners. The importance of role models, the promotion of the fundamental value perception of self-confidence, and the importance of imaginative, enthusiastic teaching underscore the premise that academic success and a humane school atmosphere go together. Beyond teaching and learning are the five important value sources of the alliance of home and school, the hidden curriculum, the competitive ethic, community agencies and activities, and hope and love (Howe 56-67). Two of these areas deserve extra comment. The hidden curriculum often puts students in a double bind as they see the contrasts between what adults say and what they do. At at early age, students learn that there are two sets of values: the ones that make up their ideals and the ones they practice in the real world (Power 11). Our goal must be to make schools places that convey the values we say we believe in. To the extent that children experience love from the adults around them, they

are likely to become reliable, thoughtful, and self-confident teen-agers with considerable capacity to handle the distractions of our increasingly complex world. The school may or may not provide love, but it can come close to doing so by bringing young people into regular contact with adults who care about them individually (Howe 64-68).

Closely related to hope and love is the idea of acceptance of others' values, especially important in our modern-day ethnic "salad bowl." The teacher serves as the key to an individual student's degree of psychological comfort in the classroom; this psychological comfort is, in turn, directly related to self-concept, the internal "yardstick" by which all external things are measured and judged. The teacher walks a double tightrope: while he/she must be able to accept ideas, understandings, and social customs which are different, but not necessarily wrong, that teacher, at the same time, must not lose sight of the task of teaching the skills, information, and processes necessary for successful integration into contemporary American society (Lambert 273-74).

Values education is incorporated in all courses of study. As in all other goals of education, teacher committment, knowledge, and skill determine, in large

measure, the degree of success (Meller 110). One practical way to give more attention to the affective objectives would be to integrate common values from several disciplines. This overlap might serve as a common approach to values education across the curriculum. For example, the disciplines of social studies, science, and mathematics share the basic values of commitment to the rational process and commitment to humanity. The rational process includes such attitudes as curiosity, good reasons, tentativeness, persistence, and communication, while commitment to humanity encompasses concern and respect for others. Just as attention to general critical thinking skills might support the cognitive objectives of various subjects, so certain values instruction might cut across the disciplines and support the affective objectives of each (Orton 124-29).

Whether consciously or unconsciously, educators and schools are constantly transmitting values to pupils. The most effective schools have relatively coherent philosophies which are uniformly applied by most or all members of the school community (Wynne 18-20). It has become increasingly important for teachers to understand the key issues in the realm of values education. Values taught in the formal curriculum and transmitted in the hidden curriculum have a profound effect on the total educational experiences of our

students. The habit of careful and thoughtful reception and transmission of communication concerning values is a skill which assumes more and more significance in our rapidly changing world.

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